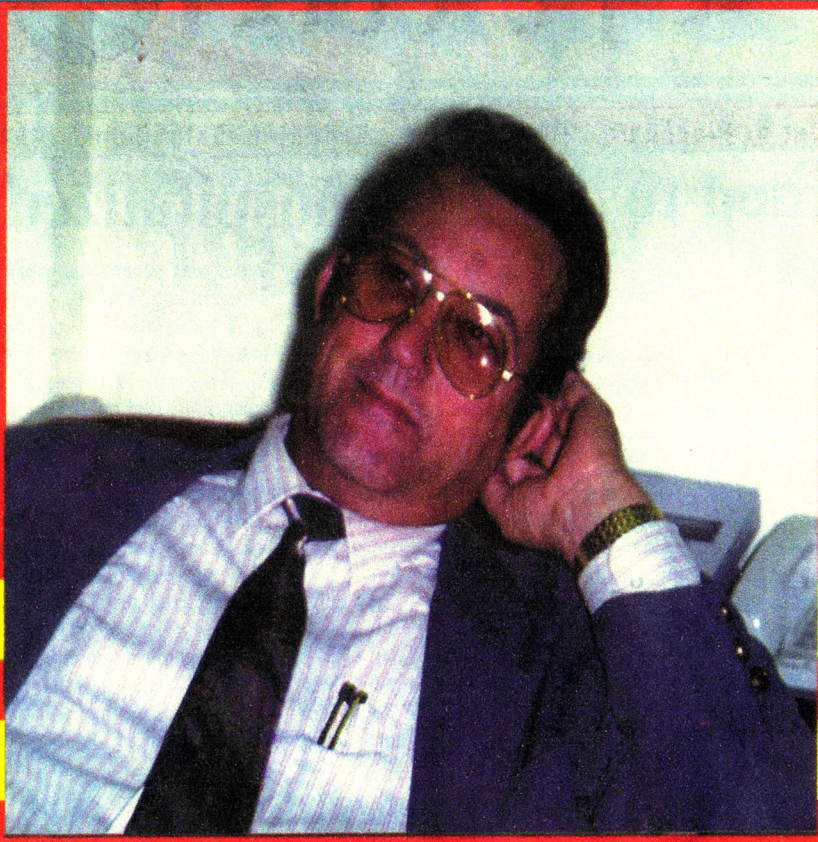


Congratulations to Roland Peterson 1997 Man of The Year



Aruba Youth
Club Coastalito
(Essolito 49 years)

Radio Caruso Booi

The News

Award presentation:
Saturday, December 13,
at Aruba Youth Club Coastalito
in Cura Cabai during annual
Christmas children's party.

MAN OF THE YEAR

By one of our special reporters

To become man of the year as the Director of the Directorate of Public Order and Security (DOOV) is no insignificant accomplishment. Before that he was the first Aruban Police-commissioner. No doubt, Roland Peterson is a hard working, energetic personality with an engaging smile and a lot of knowledge and understanding. But is that enough to acquire so much merit?

Mr. Roland W. Peterson is the Director of aforementioned governmental body. Many people from abroad, want to live and work in Aruba, therefore his job is not an easy one. It often seems that his Directorate gets all the blame when an object of criticism is called for. It stands to reason that to manage this office skillfully and adroitly, a Director needs to be diplomatic, honest, knowledgeable, understanding and to possess Salomon's wisdom to prevent unscrupulous characters to enter Aruba.

His leading motive heralds from President Eisenhower: "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done, because he wants to do it." His power of persuasion might be the source of his extraordinary accomplishments. On behalf of the Minister of Justice the Directorate issues residence permits, work permits, visa's, re-entry permits for migrants and declarations of good conduct for migrants and Dutch nationals alike. More than 32% of Aruba's population consists of migrants, as Aruba is one of the most economically stable Caribbean countries. Apart from that the Directorate has an important responsibility to devise the policy of the state security for the Minister of Justice.

Sitting tall in the saddle

Roland Wilbert Peterson was born on October 31, 1941 in Aruba. When he grew up life was hard, but his parents stimulated the children to study well and become responsible citizens. During the turbulent 1960's rebellion, unrest and the urge to change the society were threatening the foundation and values of that society with extinction. Also in Aruba this urge to change society was felt, but considerably less acute at that time. Therefore the young Aruban who left for Curaçao on the first of May 1962 to become a police officer was somewhat of an exception to the rule of that time. The wish to become a police officer simply was not 'cool' in these days.

Young Peterson studied diligently and climbed the ranks of the force. Since he started his professional life, working days of ten hours or more are quite common. He ended up becoming chief-inspector and eventually commissioner. By that time he knew the police force inside out.

If you are looking for a quintessential all Aruban, Roland Peterson, once this country's top cop as commissioner, comes right out the central casting. A small town boy, the son of a local fisherman, grew up with dreams of becoming a detective. As soon as he was old enough (19 years) he signed up for service in Curaçao and married the daughter of the boss. Back on his island as an inspector he pursued his dreams and reached out for more stars.

In 1975 the Government of the Netherlands Antilles handpicked the up- and coming 13-year's veteran of the police force, from San Nicolas, Roland Peterson, to don blue jeans and attend classes at the Dutch Police Academy in Apel-

doorn. His mission was to become a police inspector. The action was a reflection of the government's recognition that the force needed more Arubans with an academic training. From the start he was convinced that "he would not fail", although the submersion in such a different culture and way of life was not easy. But finally he could pass time with his wife and children and understood what family life could be like. Studying left more time for the family than work. Peterson completed his educational mission in four years, as one of the best of his class. "My curiosity urges me to understand how things happen, but also why they do occur." Such an attitude certainly is essential for a police officer.

At the end of 1979 he returned to his beloved Aruba as a police inspector. Times were troubled, Aruba wanted autonomy and discussions within the Kingdom regarding the desired self-rule of Aruba, were fierce. After a long struggle Aruba became an autonomous entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in 1986. This was called the 'status aparte'. Aruba no longer was a part of the Netherlands Antilles. At the same time Aruba accomplished to establish its own police force, The challenge was enormous. Quite a few police-officers did not want to continue working with the Aruban police force. They preferred the Antillian police-force. Accordingly the force was sadly understaffed. On October 31, 1985 the oil refinery closed down and Aruba faced its worst economic recession. Under these circumstances Peterson was asked for the position of Police-Commissioner. He became the first real non-centralized Police commissioner of Aruba and he continued 'to muddy the wells of inquiry with the stick of precaution', as this absolutely is part of the work of a highranking police officer.

'Chief', as his colleagues and friends call him, had to face these odds and did not hesitate to rise to the occasion. He requested the necessary assistance from Holland and started a massive recruitment program. For a police-commissioner to be able to create his own police-force is regularly exceptional. He worked miracles with his special magic. He implemented the new laws and promoted the in-service training for police-officers with the support of the FBI and the DEA. Many long working days and four years later, Aruba's economy made a speedy recovery and the Aruban police force could consider itself among the best of the world. "40% of the crimes are solved, which is very gratifying, if you consider the international rate, which is between 10 and 18%."

With an irresistible smile the ex commissioner states that "many police officers, who left the island at the end of 1985, would not stay because of the 'status aparte'. They could not even be tempted with a wheelbarrow of gold. Four years later many regretted their decision and gladly would have paid a wheelbarrow of gold to come back."

During his long police career, Roland followed many courses nationally and internationally. He also is a FBI Academy graduate. In 1987 Aruba obtained an Interpol membership. In 1988 at his first Regional Interpol meeting, he was chosen as the chairman for the Caribbean and Central American Technical Committee. In 1990 during a general Assembly in Canada he was elected to the prestigious Executive Committee of this worldwide organization. For three years he represented the American continent and the Caribbean. Today he still is the chairman of the Caribbean and Central American Regional Committee.

FIGHTING CRIME

In 1993 he organized the most extensive Interpol General Assembly ever held, so far. 167 member countries, 10 International Organizations and 660 delegates attended this meeting. Since then, whenever he meets with delegates from abroad, they are still talking about Aruba's hospitality and how everything was organized to perfection. With a twinkle in his eyes he relates how he contrived the General Assembly to be held in Aruba.

"It was at a General Assembly in Senegal in 1992. Some other countries also wanted the General Assembly for the next year. Various countries made their presentations. Some indeed were very good; they promised a fascinating historical background, exquisite buildings and captivating sightseeing trips. I would have loved to be in these countries. But I felt, that I had a mission and that was to bring the General Assembly to Aruba. Small, 'insignificant' Aruba was to compete with several of the biggest countries with some influential 'opponents'. I addressed the assembly eloquently and, showed an inspiring and magnificent video of Aruba. More convincing than words could ever be was the magnitude of my figurative material on Aruba. I presented some wonders of the world, rare beauties in bikini, standing in the surf, dipping their tantalizing toes in the crystal clear seawater. Considering that 90% of the delegates were men, my point was made. After the votes were cast and counted, Aruba got 70%."

In 1989 he faced the most difficult decision of his career. The Government, well aware of the quality of the person and his organizational talents, approached him to take over and reorganize the Directorate of Public Order and Security. After 27 years as a law enforcer and with mixed feelings he accepted. Leaving the force was not easy. The challenge did not go unheeded and Roland knew he would not fail. Serenely, Roland continued to make history as the first Aruban Director of the Directorate of Public Order and Security. Experience has taught him a lot. In this capacity he would advise the Minister of Justice on a managerial level about matters concerning the police, the penal system, prison affairs security policy in general and the fire department. On behalf of the Minister of Justice, he also would be in charge of the admissions of migrants to the country. He would also maintain the position as Head of the National Central Bureau of Interpol.

Again confronted with the task of organizing and reorganizing a department, Roland did not waste any time. Within a year he expanded the directorate consisting of 5 persons with another 35 qualified employees. Due to the enormous amount of migrants that Aruba needed for its booming economy, the work of the Directorate had considerably increased. It was impossible to attend to all these needs with only 5 persons.

"When I took over, the whole rather limited office building was stuffed with documents. It was so brimful that even the bathroom was used as a filing space. In previous years about 500 applications – a year – for a residence and a work permit had to be handled and stored. Since 1990 the amount increased dramatically to

about 500 requests a week. It was a tremendous responsibility. Quite a few of the employees had to be trained in the use of a computer. Some had never even sat in front of a typewriter. Today every worker has followed a computer course and is able to enter all kind of data in different systems. For the first time in 1990 the Directorate yielded an income for the Government of about six million florins. Previously the Directorate had hardly procured any profits. I could not have successfully completed the task of reorganizing without the valuable assistance, support and professional efforts of my staff and employees. A good manager has to pick his personnel carefully. Because the people you work with represent the capital of your organization. If you can motivate them, your success is guaranteed. It goes without saying that a good character is more to be praised than outstanding talents. Because talents without character tend to be a liability."

Today the DOOV (the Dutch abbreviation for the Directorate of Public Order and Security) has moved its offices to a pleasant office building in San Nicolas. All procedures are fully automated and the employees get every opportunity to stay abreast of the newest developments in automated storage of information and data processing.

Roland, who is the chairman of the National Disaster Committee and of numerous other committees on the island, has also been active on the social side. He is involved in community work, has been a member for the 'Centro di Bario' and of various other organizations. Be-

hind the scene he is constantly organizing and coordination help for many organizations.

At the Interpol General Assembly in 1993, his recommendation, that Interpol would advise the other member countries to pass legislation to protect not only children, but also the disabled and the elderly, was accepted.

In 1993, her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands knighted Roland. He was made a member of the Order of Orange Nassau. Remarkably, six years later, he advanced as a gallant. On account of exceptional merit he was promoted to Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau.

This year as well as the past several years, the Directorate has been under fire - on one hand - by a group of citizens, which is complaining that too many migrants are permitted to live and work on the island. On the other hand another group is complaining that not enough migrants are permitted to enter and that therefore the economy will stagnate.

"Finding that balance (between 'too many' and 'not enough') is one of the most demanding tasks in my work. We can read about these problems in the Bible and today on the eve of the 21st century most developed countries are still coping with it."

Jokingly, Roland states: "If I can come up with a solution to these problems, I will patent it and then sell it to the US and Europe, no doubt I would be the most prosperous and moneyed man alive. Aruba is a small island and we cannot solve the problems of the entire region. We have to continue a strict policy regarding the entrance of migrants. But not withstanding rules and regula-

tion, we should never forget that we are dealing with human lives. If on humanitarian grounds I can save the life of one child, by letting it migrate to Aruba, I will do so and I am willing to carry the burden of criticism for the rest of my life. The scars you acquire by exercising courage will never make you feel inferior.”

The economic expansion needs many workers. A balanced development of the amount of migrants is essential. Therefore it seems only sensible to encourage capital intensive labor enterprises. These are to replace labor intensive ventures, for instance information and communication technology. So far, Roland is convinced that the situation is well in hand and his Directorate is doing a skillful job. He envisions Aruba as a champion in the region, offering hospitality and knowledge.

“To serve and protect the Aruban people”, always has been Roland’s mission. He will continue with that mission in whatever capacity, to the best of his knowledge. Aruba can be proud of one of his most accomplished ‘yiu di tera’ (a son of Aruba’s soil), who believed in what he was doing and was doing it well. He could do it so well, because he worked ceaselessly, dedicatedly and intelligently, but also because his family sustained him. They gave him the necessary space and time to reach for his stars and realize his goals. Thanks to his family and all loyal and devoted people, who believed in his endeavors, he could excel even more for the benefit of Aruba. Roland who’s hobbies are horseback riding and fishing says with a sigh:

“I have been so busy these last years that I hardly have time to practice my hobbies. A harbor and a stable are safe places for respectively a ship and a

horse, but that is not what ships and horses are made for.”

It is as clear as daylight that being named man of the year is well deserved. Certainly for a man of such striking power, always motivating people to make another effort for the good cause. He never forgets where he came from and gives praise where it is due. As he uses many effective and telling proverbs, he also ends this interview with a very appropriate one, saying: “success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”